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NORTH SHORE -- In the next few months, Iraqi children could be using a notebook with a New Trier Township High School logo or a pen from Waukegan High School.

Students from 25 high schools on the North Shore and other suburbs are collecting supplies to ship to eight schools in Balad, Iraq, about 45 miles northwest of Baghdad. The effort is organized by U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.).

"I want them to receive a Glenbrook or Wheeling or Hersey High School notebook so the child thinks about this school in America and there is a connection there," Kirk said.

Kirk connected with the Balad schools through a friend in the 372nd Engineer Group, an Army Reserve unit that has helped build schools in Iraq.

"It hopefully will create a better bond between the soldiers and the students," said Jordan Guggenheim, Highland Park High's senior class president.

Guggenheim said he has donated folders, paper, pens and pencils, and that other Highland Park students have given money and school supplies.

The students on Kirk's Student Leadership Advisory Board--one or two from each high school in his district--also will become pen pals with an Iraqi child, starting with a note on the first page of a donated notebook.

"It's a great step forward for rebuilding ties in Iraq," Guggenheim said.